Oct. 13. 1901

He that is not with me is against me.

Luke XI - 23

He that is not against us, is on our part.

Mark IX - 40

These two sayings, in form at least, may appear to be somewhat inconsistent or even contradictory. The first is like the characteristic utterance of a fanatic; the second seems to contain more liberality and breadth of view. The man of one idea is very apt to see in those who refuse to be kindled with his fire he is always seeking to communicate, his worst and most dangerous opponents. On a question like that of Temperance reform you may notice that the advocate of extreme measures is prone to regard people of moderate views as being very largely, if not mainly, responsible for drunkenness and its attendant evils. With such men, not to fight shoulder to shoulder under the banner which they have advanced, is to stand among the ranks of the common enemy, or to be guilty of aiding and abetting the common foe. It is possible therefore to read this saying

"He that is not with me is against me," as if its author were, at that moment, in a somewhat excited and intolerant mood; while the other saying, "He that is not against us is on our part," breathes more of the habitual calmness and serenity of the mind of Christ.

The two expressions however not only agree perfectly, but the essential meaning of both is the same. They speak only different applications of the same truth. If we say that on life's battle field there can be no such thing as neutrality, so far as the great fundamental conflict between good and evil is concerned, but every human personality must, of necessity, add weight and force to one side or the other, in that conflict, we may then turn this statement in either direction to give us the sayings we have quoted.

He whose influence does not tell in favor of the higher life, must be reckoned as being, in effect, a champion of the lower life; which tends always toward a deeper degradation. He who is not against the nobler forces of his time, though he bear no conspicuous part in their defence, is really the helper and friend of the life of the spirit. The main point is that,

by the very law of its being, such mind is made a friend or an enemy to the good; and the sum of its power, however humble that mind may be, is probably greater than any of us can easily imagine.

Most lives, it is true, embody a compound of good and evil. No man is so bad as not to possess some redeeming traits; few are so virtuous as not to be, in any measure, foiled by the world's wickedness. But in one direction or the other there must be a prevailing balance. Two such natures as make every heart more or less a battle ground between the higher and the lower self cannot long exist in stable equilibrium. The better or the worser self must be supreme, and must stamp the life, as a whole, with its good or evil impress.

The message of this Gospel being, then, that no man liveth or dieth to himself, it says to all men that there is no possible way by which they can keep to themselves the reaping of whatever harvest they have sown: but the wickedness which they have done adds to the debasement of many, for whom folk they

them become in part responsible, or the virtue they have achieved goes surely to increase the reason always being paid for the redemption of the race.

This fundamental certainly of your life needs to be stated in different ways, to meet the needs of very different people. Then on all the careless and selfish and indifferent souls, whom, if it were possible, one would like to make hear the warning issued by the real master of their destiny: before whose judgement seat they must all be tried: "He that is not with me is against me." Not to do something for the spiritual enfranchisement of men is to rivet closer the bonds which hold many in captivity to weakness and sin. Then is no possibility of standing on side and seeing the great human procession pass, without responsibility for the weal or woe of any of these striving struggling souls: the very attitude of indifferent spectator becomes, again and again, an act of criminal negligence.

Do we hold him guiltless who, while a drowning person is crying for help, stands idly on the bank, and makes no move toward

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rescue? Does the fact that he did nothing to induce that person to enter the water discharge him from all part in the fatal accident, if, with the means of succor close at hand, he puts forth no effort to save a life from destruction?

When ~~[illegible]~~ at last we stand when all events are revealed; when all action and inaction, is truly judged, how many of us may be compelled to hear the charge." in that you did nothing to help me, when I crossed that boom, you are my murderer; and against you, before God's angels I bring the accusation that your ~~[illegible]~~ negligence meant at least the worthless ruin of a human soul!"

Youth, being inexperienced, does not see many a deadly risk in which it helps to involve some other life. Then is that excuse for a great deal of youthful immorality: it is done without understanding of the wickedness, and sometimes awful consequences that may be plunked down upon the heads of others. It is such good fun, being ~~upon~~ high up on the mountain side, when the very air that one breathes is like wine in the blood, to start the half-poised

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boulder from its insecure resting place, and see it crash and bound through the crops till it disappears from view! It brings such an exhilarating sense of power to think that one tiny human hand may set in motion this titanic energy. Are these houses and peaceful fields in the valley below, to think this spot may carry grim desolation? One does not see them. One will not believe that they are there; and half unconsciously one hurries on, that no accusing wail of anguish may rise up from the depth below, to shatter one's sense of innocence.

Of all this youth is easily capable; and we can only understand the deeds, of which to be modern manhood and womanhood seems, not incapable, by remembering that "men are but children of a larger growth." That some blindness to results must be characteristic of a great many human beings, it is impossible to think that. Knowingly, they could work the mischief which, one day, they must know that they have done.

~~How many~~ Such reckless individuals, being brought to face to face with the picture of actual pain and anguish, ~~such as~~ which human beings of like race to their own, shudder and turn pale. They are not always, if even, entirely insensible to the suffering of others. They simply know not what they do. Were it otherwise the monstrous crimes of which human nature is guilty would brand our ~~the~~ whole race with an infamy ~~which~~ that the sum of all its virtues could scarcely redeem.

But upon ~~the~~ this dark night there must dawn at last a fearful awakening, not only the evil that has been done, but the good that has been left undone; when that meant life or death to other souls, must one day rise up to accuse us, and make us feel how ~~utterly~~ unworthy we have been in our handling of the great gifts bestowed upon us. How we shall wish in that hour that some voice had sounded in our ears, as with the blare of a trumpet, not to be unheard, the solemn warning. "He that is not with us is against me." To be merely indifferent to the sacred obligations which our close association with ~~each other~~ ~~has~~ ~~us~~ ~~impose~~ ~~s~~, is to become an enemy to the whole cause of right and truth in the world.

It would be interesting, if we were able to trace out the hidden working of mental influences, to know just what is the moral effect of that which has become a somewhat fashionable creed in our day under the name of Agnosticism. That the proof of many things commonly believed in the past comes far short of being an adequate demonstration, we are forced to acknowledge. That when minds are not convinced even of the reasonable probability of the positions assumed by religious faith, it is better for them to express their uncertainty than to pretend an assurance which they do not feel, we may also freely grant.

But the profession of not knowing or believing ~~that has been~~ made of late years by ~~the~~ many whose position has given them great influence, especially over the minds of young men, seems to have produced a widespread impression that there is some special merit and virtue in holding an attitude of mere neutrality, ~~so far as religious interests are concerned~~ as to the value and credibility of religious beliefs. Now, among those who inherit the fruits of the best moral and religious culture of the past, the immediate effect of giving up all thought of an overruling Providence and an

immortal life is quite of their. to throw the mind back,
with greater intensity of effect upon the life that
now is, and its own labors for the world's improvement.

The less they rely upon God to some men from
evil, the more they feel it incumbent on themselves
to take up the work of reform; and the more dim their
hope becomes of a heaven in which recompense can be made
for human suffering, the greater their desire to right
the wrongs here and now. No one who knows what
is being done, at this present moment, by men and
women without much religious faith will be disposed
to rail at agnosticism as if it were a sinful sin.

But how is it with a class of minds whose
moral inheritance contains more that has been left over from
~~is too removed from~~ a savage
ancestry? What is the effect of agnosticism in the
cultivated classes coming out of our great schools of learning,
upon those less fortunate in their birth and
training? What will they that are higher in the
social scale most easily communicate to minds
which instinctively pay deference to their superior
advantages? Will it be the college Professor's "enthusiasm
for humanity" with which he most readily inoculates
the rank and file of young men in his class room,

or will it be his own religious institutes that they copy, and come to admire, as the mark of a free and enlightened mind? Too often, one must wish, again, that the words of that supreme Master of the higher life, who based all his hope for mankind upon the great religious idea of the infinite Fatherhood of God, might come home to men whose example, though not meant to be hostile, really turns the hearts of others away from that idea. "He that is not with me is against me." To ignore the place and the mission of religious faith, is apt to be one of the deadliest forms of antagonism. If one cannot believe, surely that is his misfortune rather than his fault. But let it be regarded then as a loss and lack. Let men be sorry when they lose the hope that has been the chief inspiration of the world through past ages; not proud as if thereby they had purchased distinction in life's school, and were commissioned to establish a new fashion of inattention to religious duties, which it would be well for

the world to follow.

But, to turn to the other application of the truth we have been considering, perhaps there are as many who need its comfort, as there are of those others who ought to have its stimul. Probably every person who tries to do right, and to lead a good life, is frequently impressed with a painful sense of the insignificance of his endeavors, so far as their influence upon other lives is concerned.

All of us are apt to be not only modest, but skeptical, as to any power we possess to affect, sensibly, the general tone and tendency of the life about us. Sometimes people use this as an excuse for abandoning the ideals they have followed for a little way; alleging that it can make no real difference what their influence and example may be, so long as they keep within the letter of the law.

More often, no doubt, without being disobedient to this heavenly vision, people are profoundly discouraged as to the results which they seem able to accomplish. -

Perhaps since Milton's great Sonnet was written few lines of poetry have found a wider echo, or a deeper response in human hearts than his

assurance that "they also serve who stand and wait." In the same way every faithful soul may find sudden encouragement in the Master's saying that they who are not ~~yet~~ found in his service will be counted in his host. In his possible he pictures the surprise of those who, even on earth, were never conscious of doing great things, when they learn of the high rewards prepared for them.

It is not given to many in the battle of life to serve as an officer of distinction; but, very often, it is the private soldier rather than his general to whom the credit of a victory belongs; and always the real essence of military genius is to know how to use the loyalty and courage of the common man. One of the rediscoveries of our age, which is perhaps of more importance than all our famous inventions put together, is that of the real worth of every humblest individual. That is the meaning of the rise of democracy and the growth of government by the people.

Each man, as a man, has the very highest of all potential values; and the world's good is chiefly the sum of millions of faithful services

rendered without hope of securing much recognition or applause. In the earlier part of this world wide movement for the uplifting of the common people, it was partly turned out of its true path by a false philosophy, which minimized the worth of all personalities, both small and great,

It was seen that the great men and women of history had not alone produced the world's advance in civilization, and for a time it seemed as if the place of supreme power, hitherto ascribed to them, might be given to abstract laws and impersonal forces, which were supposed by many to govern human destiny. It was not that Christ had lived and died for men; it was the climate and soil of Palestine countries which accounted for the character of their inhabitants.

Now we are coming to realize again that we live above everything else in a world of persons; and that personality is always and everywhere the supreme reality. It is not the system; it is the man handling and making use of the system, who is the dominant factor of every situation. It is not the "Trust" which threatens us, for

every larger combination of workers is, in itself, a step of advance; it is the selfish greed of the man who stands at the head of such a combination which constitutes the ~~only~~ danger we have come to fear. We are by way of discovering that any ~~one~~ person, whether small or great, has an enormous and unmeasured power to affect the happiness and well being of the community at large. We are at this moment ~~Still too~~ pondering ~~over~~ the lesson recently taught us, that one man, in the cool degree ignorant and insignificant, can with a small pistol plunge the world in mourning; and, according to our mood, we can probably still shuddering with fear of those who may imitate his example, or struck with the wonder of it that, where it is so easy to purchase an evil notoriety, there are so few in any wise disposed to take advantage of this opportunity.

And though it is much easier to destroy than to heal and save, yet something of that tremendous capacity for mischief which life puts into the hands of every man, is

also put into his hands for good. The fearful horror wrought when the careless or sleepy switchman fails of his duty in presence of the on coming rush of the flying railway train, does but show what an important link he is in the great industrial machine, and how much he contributes to the daily ministration of the worlds need. every time he stands, alert and faithful at his post, to perform the service required of him.

There is no denial of the great moral place in history if we say that all the blessings of our existence are chiefly purchased and maintained by the sum of the inconspicuous faithful labors of these servants, who do their part ~~each day~~ each day, all over the world, and age after age. Indeed that is what the example of the great man is for; to inspire and enlighten the heart of the common man for the humble duties he is called to perform. The great Son of God dies upon the cross, not that man in the abstract, may be saved

from ~~Endless~~ perdition, but to teach you and me the lesson of obedience, even unto death, in dealing with opportunities which are too often despised because they only touch the lives of a few.—

No one need think of himself as a nonentity or a failure, because he has not attracted to himself, by some exceptional deed, the public notice. Christianity tells him that his personality, just as he stands, is a most wonderous reality; and that in precisely ~~just~~ the kind of personal influence which he may exercise lies the Key to every problem given us to solve.

The simple truth about the life of Christ, adding to it other which some have tried to magnify and adorn by ~~x~~ incomprehensible ~~speculations~~ mysteries; and ~~others~~ some have missed in laborious attempts to account for his hold upon the minds of men, is that he was the greatest person in the world's history. He was great, not alone in this or that particular, which we can describe, but in all the elements of being, many of which are far beyond ~~our~~ the reach of our investigation. In him all the forces that show themselves in our human life were so richly and perfectly commingled, as to make him the one supreme personality which our race

has produced. The stately creeds and subtle theologies of the church can really say no more than this; and they have practically lost the meaning and the inspiration of Christian faith, who say anything less.

Yet magnificent as his spiritual endowment was, and boundless as his power over the world may grow to be, he alone does not complete the world's redemption from sin and wrong. That is left to you and me, and to the millions of our "brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world"; as we patiently and steadfastly exercise our smaller gifts, and add together the sum of our united spiritual endeavor.

Does one say it is so little he can do? But there is scarcely a person living who can do any more; and the world gets on not alone because there are a few here and there who possess exceptional genius, but because the unnumbered thousands do their little part; as each small spring upon our hillsides is constant in pouring out its tribute to the great river dependent on its supply.

The wise Master not only knew persons, but it might be said in a certain sense that he knew nothing else. God was to him, the mightiest and

most majestic of all personalities; and we, with all our talk of natural laws and inevitable sequences, have not outgrown his wisdom — we simply have not risen to the stature of his thought. till we reflect that order of the world about us is that infinite will which is the only source of energy and power.

We must be also sure a living person, an immortal spirit; and therefore the meaning of his teaching is that man can no more cease to be a king in his domain, than God can abdicate his throne. One way or another that fraction or spark of eternal life bound up in him must exert itself upon the life surrounding. If it be bent and swayed toward ends that are good, then need be no apprehension that it will be in the end unrecognized or unrewarded. God will know them that are his, whatever their profession, or by whatever name they are called.

Yet to keep it from the evil this life must be fastened, bound securely, to things that are good and pure. The world's religion, as the word implies, is that which binds. Forms may change, belief may pass away, yet to the end of this history man must have a religion, because not to be for the good sometimes is to be against them, and religion is the tie that holds men to God's service in the world.